

## QUESTION 19

### God's Will

Having considered the things that pertain to God's knowledge, we must now consider the things that pertain to God's will. First, we will consider God's will itself (question 19); second, we will consider what pertains to His will absolutely speaking (questions 20-21); and, third, we will consider what pertains to His intellect in relation to His will (questions 22-24).

On the topic of God's will itself there are twelve questions: (1) Is there a will in God? (2) Does God will things distinct from Himself? (3) Does God will whatever He wills by necessity? (4) Is God's will a cause of things? (5) Can a cause be assigned for God's act of willing? (6) Is God's will always fulfilled? (7) Is God's will mutable? (8) Does God's will impose necessity on the things willed? (9) Does God will evils? (10) Does God have free choice? (11) Should signs be ascribed to God's will? (12) Is it appropriate to posit five signs of God's will?

### Article 1

#### Is there a will in God?

It seems that there is no will in God:

**Objection 1:** The object of the will is the end and the good. But no end can be assigned to God. Therefore, there is no will in God.

**Objection 2:** The will is a certain sort of desire. But since a desire is for a thing that is not had, it indicates an imperfection—which cannot belong to God. Therefore, there is no will in God.

**Objection 3:** According to the Philosopher in *De Anima* 3, the will is a moved mover. But as *Physics* 8 proves, God is the first unmoved mover. Therefore, in God there is no will.

**But contrary to this:** Romans 12:2 says: "..... that you may prove what is ..... the will of God."

**I respond:** There is a will in God, just as there is an intellect in Him, since the will follows upon the intellect.

For just as a natural thing has *esse* in actuality through its form, so an intellect understands in actuality through its intelligible form.

But every entity is related to a form that is natural to it in such a way that (a) when it does not possess it, it tends toward it, and (b) when it does possess it, it comes to rest in it. The same holds for every natural perfection that is a good of the entity's nature. And this relation to the good is called *natural appetite* in things that lack cognition.

Hence, an intellectual nature has a similar relation to the good apprehended through an intelligible form, so that (a) when it possesses that good, it rests in it, and (b) when it does not possess it, it seeks after it. And both of these points pertain to the will. Hence, in anything that has an intellect there is a will, just as there is an animal appetite in anything that has sensory cognition.

And so there has to be a will in God, because there is an intellect in Him. Hence, just as His act of understanding is His *esse*, so too is His act of will.

**Reply to objection 1:** Even though nothing distinct from God is God's end, nonetheless, He Himself is the end with respect to all the things that are made by Him. And this is so because of His essence, since, as was shown above (q. 6, a. 3), He is good through His essence. For the end has the nature of a good.

**Reply to objection 2:** In us the will pertains to the appetitive part of the soul. But even though the appetitive part gets its name from the fact that it desires, it is not the case that its only act is to desire what it does not possess. Rather, it also has the act of loving what it possesses, and the act of delighting

in it. And it is with respect to these two acts that a will is posited in God. For God's will always possesses the good that is its object, since, as has been said, it does not differ from that object in its essence.

**Reply to objection 3:** A will whose principal object is a good that exists outside the will must be moved by something. But the object of God's will is His own goodness, which is His essence. Hence, since God's will is His essence, it is moved by itself alone and not by anything distinct from it—in the sense in which understanding and willing are called motions. (This was the sense in which Plato claimed that the first mover moves itself.)

## Article 2

### Does God will things distinct from Himself?

It seems that God does not will things distinct from Himself:

**Objection 1:** God's act of will is His *esse*. But God is not distinct from Himself. Therefore, He does not will anything distinct from Himself.

**Objection 2:** What is willed moves the will in the way that what is desirable moves the appetite, according to *De Anima* 3. Therefore, if God willed something distinct from Himself, His will would be moved by something distinct from Himself—which is impossible.

**Objection 3:** If the thing willed is sufficient for a given will, then it does not seek anything else. But God's goodness is sufficient for Himself, and His will is satisfied by it. Therefore, God does not will anything distinct from Himself.

**Objection 4:** Acts of will are multiplied according to the things that are willed. Therefore, if God willed both Himself and things distinct from Himself, it would follow that His act of will is multiplied, and as a result His *esse*, which is His act of will, would be multiplied. But this is impossible. Therefore, He does not will things distinct from Himself.

**But contrary to this:** In 1 Thessalonians 4:3 the Apostle says: "This is the will of God, your sanctification."

**I respond:** God wills not only Himself, but also things distinct from Himself.

This is clear from the comparison introduced above (a. 1). For a natural thing has a natural inclination toward its own good—not only in order that it might acquire it, when it does not possess it, or rest in it, when it does possess it, but also in order that it might diffuse its own good to others as much as possible. Hence, we see that every agent, insofar as it is perfect and acting, effects what is similar to itself.

Hence, it likewise pertains to the nature of the will that it should, to the extent that this is possible, communicate to others the good that it itself possesses. And this pertains in a special way to God's will, from which every perfection is derived through a certain likeness. Hence, if natural things communicate their own good to others insofar as they are perfect, then *a fortiori* it pertains to the divine will that it should communicate its own good to others through a likeness, to the extent that this is possible. So, then, God wills both that He Himself should exist and that other things should exist. But He wills Himself as an end and other things as ordered to that end, insofar as it is fitting that other things should also participate in the divine goodness.

**Reply to objection 1:** Even though God's act of will is His *esse* in reality, nonetheless, as is clear from what was said above (q. 13, a. 4), it differs conceptually from His *esse* according to different modes of understanding and signifying. For when I say 'God exists', no relation to anything is implied in the

way it is when I say, ‘God wills’. And so even though God is not something distinct from Himself, He nonetheless wills something distinct from Himself.

**Reply to objection 2:** In those things that we ourselves will for the sake of an end, the end has the complete nature of a mover, and this is what moves the will. This is especially clear in the case of those things that we will *only* for the sake of an end. For instance, when someone wills to take a bitter potion, he wills nothing in it except health, and it is health alone that moves his will. It is otherwise with someone who takes a sweet potion; he wills the potion not only for the sake of health, but also for its own sake.

Hence, since, as has been explained, God wills things distinct from Himself only for the sake of that end which is His own goodness, it does not follow that something other than His goodness moves His will. And so just as He understands things distinct from Himself by understanding His own essence, so too He wills things distinct from Himself by willing His own goodness.

**Reply to objection 3:** From the fact that God’s own goodness is sufficient for the divine will it does not follow that He wills nothing else; instead, all that follows is that He does not will anything else except because of His own goodness. In the same way, even though God’s intellect is perfect by reason of the fact that it knows the divine essence, it nonetheless knows other things in that essence.

**Reply to objection 4:** Just as God’s act of understanding is one because He sees many things in only one thing, so too God’s act of will is one and simple because He wills many things through just one thing, viz., His own goodness.

### Article 3

#### Does God will whatever He wills by necessity?

It seems that God wills whatever He wills by necessity:

**Objection 1:** Everything eternal is necessary. But whatever God wills, He wills from eternity; otherwise, His will would be mutable. Therefore, whatever God wills, He wills by necessity.

**Objection 2:** God wills things distinct from Himself insofar as He wills His own goodness. But God wills His own goodness by necessity. Therefore, He wills things distinct from Himself by necessity.

**Objection 3:** Whatever is natural to God is necessary, since, as was shown above (q. 2, a. 3), God is a necessary being *per se* and the source of all necessity. But it is natural to Him to will whatever He wills, since, as *Metaphysics 5* says, in God there cannot be anything besides His own nature. Therefore, whatever He wills, He wills of necessity.

**Objection 4:** *Not necessary to be* is equivalent to *possible not to be*. Therefore, if it is not necessary that God will some of the things that He wills, then it is possible that He not will those things, and it is possible that He will something that He does not in fact will. Therefore, the divine will is contingent with respect to two opposites. And so the divine will is imperfect, since everything contingent is imperfect and mutable.

**Objection 5:** As the Commentator says in *Physics 2*, no action follows from something that is open to two opposites, unless it is inclined by something else to one of the opposites. Therefore, if God’s will is open to two opposites in some matters, it follows that He is determined to His effect by something else. And so He has some prior cause.

**Objection 6:** Whatever God knows, He knows by necessity. But just as God’s knowledge is His essence, so too is His act of will. Therefore, whatever God wills, He wills by necessity.

**But contrary to this:** Ephesians 1:11 says: “He who works all things according to the counsel of

His will.” But what we ourselves do according to the counsel of our will, we do not will by necessity. Therefore, it is not the case that whatever God wills, He wills by necessity.

**I respond:** ‘Necessary’ is predicated in two ways, viz., absolutely (*absolute*) and conditionally (*ex suppositione*).

Something is judged to be *absolutely necessary* because of the relation between the terms, i.e., either because (a) the predicate occurs in the definition of the subject, as in ‘It is necessary that a man is an animal’, or because (b) the subject is part of the concept of the predicate, as in ‘It is necessary that a number is either even or odd.’ In this sense of ‘necessary’, it is not necessary that Socrates is sitting. Hence, this is not absolutely necessary, though it can be called *conditionally necessary*. For once it is assumed that Socrates is sitting, then, for as long as he is sitting, it is necessary that he is sitting.

As for the things willed by God, one must take into account that (a) it is absolutely necessary that God will some of them, but that (b) this is not true of all the things that He wills.

For instance, God’s will has a necessary relation to His own goodness, which is its proper object. Hence, God wills by necessity that His own goodness should exist, just as our own will wills happiness by necessity. In the same way, every other power has a necessary relation to its proper and principal object, e.g., sight to color. For it is part of its nature to tend toward that object.

However, God wills things distinct from Himself insofar as they are ordered to His goodness as an end. But we ourselves, in willing an end, do not will by necessity the things that are ordered to that end, unless they are such that the end cannot exist without them—in the way that we will to eat food because we will to conserve our life, or in the way that we will a ship because we will to cross the sea. However, we do not will by necessity things without which the end can exist. For instance, we do not by necessity will to have a horse in order to go somewhere, since we can travel without a horse. And the same line of reasoning holds for other cases.

Hence, since God’s goodness is perfect and can exist without other things—for no perfection is added to Him by other things—it follows that things distinct from Himself are such that it is not absolutely necessary that He will them. And yet it is conditionally necessary. For once it is assumed that He has willed something, He is not able not to will it, since His will cannot change.

**Reply to objection 1:** From the fact that God wills something from eternity, it does not follow that it is necessary that He will it, except conditionally.

**Reply to objection 2:** Even though God wills His own goodness by necessity, He nonetheless does not will by necessity those things that He wills for the sake of His goodness, since His goodness can exist without those other things.

**Reply to objection 3:** It is not natural to God to will any of the other things that He does not will by necessity. But neither is it unnatural or contrary to His nature; instead, it is voluntary.

**Reply to objection 4:** In some cases a necessary cause does not have a necessary relation to any effect, and this happens because of a defect in the effect and not because of a defect in the cause. For instance, the sun’s power does not have a necessary relation to any of the things that happen contingently here below—not because of a defect in the sun’s power, but because of a defect in an effect that does not necessarily issue from the cause. Similarly, the fact that God does not will by necessity certain of the things that He wills stems not from a defect in the divine will, but from a defect that belongs by its nature to the thing willed—more specifically, because the thing is such that God’s perfect goodness can exist without it. Indeed, this defect is endemic to every created good.

**Reply to objection 5:** A cause that is of itself contingent must be determined to its effect by something external to it. But God’s will, which has necessity of itself, determines itself to what it wills when it has a non-necessary relation to the thing willed.

**Reply to objection 6:** Just as God’s *esse* is necessary in itself, so too are the divine act of willing

and the divine act of knowing. However, God's act of knowing has a necessary relation to the things known, whereas God's act of willing does not have a necessary relation to the things willed. The reason for this is that an act of knowing is had of things insofar as they exist in the knower, whereas an act of willing is related to things insofar as they exist in themselves. Therefore, all things distinct from God have necessary *esse* insofar as they exist in God, whereas insofar as they exist in themselves, they do not have absolute necessity in the sense of being necessary through themselves. Because of this, whatever God knows, He knows by necessity, whereas it is not the case that whatever He wills, He wills by necessity.

#### Article 4

##### Is God's will a cause of things?

It seems that God's will is not a cause of things:

**Objection 1:** In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says, "Just as our sun—neither deliberating nor choosing, but through its very being—illuminates all things in such a way that by its power they participate in its light, so too the divine good—through its very essence—sends the rays of its goodness into all the things that exist." But anything that acts through its will acts with deliberation and choice. Therefore, God does not act through His will. Therefore, God's will is not a cause of things.

**Objection 2:** The first thing in any ordering is that which is such-and-such through its essence. For instance, in the ordering of things that are on fire, the first thing is that which is fire through its essence. But God is the first agent. Therefore, He is an agent through His essence, which is His nature. Therefore, He acts through His nature and not through His will. Therefore, God's will is not a cause of things.

**Objection 3:** If something is a cause of an effect by virtue of its being what it is, then it is a cause through its nature and not through its will. For instance, fire is a cause of warmth by virtue of its being hot, whereas, by contrast, a craftsman is a cause of a house by virtue of the fact that he wills to make it. But in *De Doctrina Christiana* 1 Augustine says, "Because God is good, we exist." Therefore, it is through His nature that God is a cause of things, and not through His will.

**Objection 4:** There is a single cause for a single thing. But, as was explained above (q. 14, a. 8), God's knowledge is a cause of created things. Therefore, God's will should not be posited as a cause of those things.

**But contrary to this:** Wisdom 11:26 says, "How could anything endure, if You did not will it?"

**I respond:** One must assert that God's will is a cause of things, and that God acts through His will and not by a necessity of nature, as some have claimed. This can be made clear in three ways.

First, *from the very ordering of agent causes:* Since, as *Physics* 2 proves, both intellect and nature act for the sake of an end, a thing that acts through its nature must have both its end and the necessary means to that end predetermined for it by some higher intellect. For instance, an arrow has its end and fixed mode of acting predetermined for it by the archer. Hence, that which acts through its intellect and will must be prior to that which acts through its nature. Therefore, since God is first in the ordering of agents, He must act through His intellect and will.

Second, *from the nature of a natural agent:* It pertains to a natural agent to produce a single sort of effect, since its nature acts in one and the same way as long as it is unimpeded. This is because it acts by virtue of its being what it is. Hence, as long as it is what it is, it produces only that sort of effect. For everything that acts through its nature has determinate *esse*. Therefore, since God's *esse* is not

determinate but contains within itself all the perfections of being, it is impossible that God should act by a necessity of nature, unless perhaps He were to effect something indeterminate and unlimited in being—which, as was shown above (q. 7, a. 2), is impossible. Therefore, He does not act by a necessity of nature; instead, determinate effects proceed from His infinite perfection according to the determination of His will and intellect.

Third, *from the relation of effects to their cause*: Effects proceed from an agent cause to the extent that they preexist in that cause. For every agent effects what is similar to itself. Now effects preexist in a cause according to the mode of that cause. Hence, since God's *esse* is His very act of understanding, His effects preexist in Him in an intelligible mode. Therefore, they also proceed from Him through an intelligible mode. And so, as a result, they proceed from Him through the mode of an act of willing. For His inclination to effect what is conceived by His intellect pertains to His will. Therefore, God's will is a cause of things.

**Reply to objection 1:** In this passage Dionysius does not mean to deny choice to God absolutely speaking, but only in a certain respect—viz., insofar as He communicates His goodness not just to some things, but to all things. So choice is denied only insofar as it implies a certain sort of selectivity.

**Reply to objection 2:** Since God's essence is His act of understanding and His act of willing, from the fact that He acts through His essence, it follows that He acts through the mode of intellect and will.

**Reply to objection 3:** The good is the object of the will. Therefore, as was explained above (a. 2), the assertion, "Because God is good, we exist," is made because God's goodness is the reason for His willing all other things.

**Reply to objection 4:** Even in our own case, one and the same effect is caused both (a) by the guidance of knowledge, by which the form of the work is conceived, and (b) by the authority of the will, since it is only through the will that the form as existing just in the intellect is ordered to existing or not existing in the effect.

Hence, the term 'speculative intellect' does not imply anything about acting. Instead, power is the cause that executes the action, since the term 'power' denominates the immediate principle of action. But these things are all one in God.

## Article 5

### Can a cause be assigned for God's act of willing?

It seems that a cause can be assigned for God's act of willing:

**Objection 1:** In 83 *Quaestiones* Augustine says, "Who would dare claim that God has created all things without reason?" But a voluntary agent's reason for acting is also a cause of his act of willing. Therefore, God's act of willing has a cause.

**Objection 2:** When things are effected by someone who wills them for the sake of no cause at all, one should not assign any cause to them except the will of the one who wills them. But, as has been shown (a. 4), God's will is a cause of all things. Therefore, if His act of willing does not have a cause, then in all natural things one should seek no cause other than God's will alone. And so all the sciences, which try to assign causes to various effects, would be in vain—which seems absurd. Therefore, some cause can be assigned to God's act of willing.

**Objection 3:** If something is effected by one who wills it for the sake of no cause at all, then it depends on his simple act of willing. Therefore, if God's act of willing has no cause, it follows that all the things that are effected depend on His simple act of willing and do not have any other cause—which

is absurd.

**But contrary to this:** In *83 Quaestiones* Augustine says, “Every efficient cause is greater than that which is effected by it; but nothing is greater than God’s act of willing; therefore, no cause should be sought for it.”

**I respond:** There is no way in which God’s act of willing has a cause.

To see this clearly, notice that since the will follows the intellect, there can be a cause of one who wills *qua* willing in the same way that there can be a cause of one who understands *qua* understanding.

Now in the case of the intellect, the situation is such that if someone understands a principle and its conclusion separately from one another, then the understanding of the principle is a cause of the knowledge of the conclusion. However, if some intellect were to discern the conclusion *in* the principle itself, apprehending both of them in a single thought, then in that intellect the knowledge of the conclusion would not be caused by an understanding of the principles. For one and the same thing is not a cause of itself. Nonetheless, that intellect would still understand that the principles are a cause of the conclusion.

Something similar holds in the case of the will. In the will, an end is related to the means to that end in the same way that, in the intellect, principles are related to their conclusions. Hence, if someone wills the end by one act and the means to that end by a separate act, then the act of willing the end will be a cause of the act of willing the means to that end. However, this cannot be the case if he wills both the end and the means to that end in a single act. For one and the same thing cannot be a cause of itself. Yet it will still be true to assert that he wills that the means to the end should be ordered to that end.

Now just as God understands all things in His own essence by a single act, so too He wills all things in His goodness by a single act. In God’s case, His understanding a cause is not a cause of His understanding its effects; instead, He understands the effects *in* the cause. In exactly the same way, His willing an end is not a cause of His willing the means to that end; instead, [by one act] He wills that the means to an end should be ordered to that end. Therefore, He wills that *this* should exist because of *that*, but it is not because He wills *that* that He wills *this*.

**Reply to objection 1:** God’s will is reasonable not because there is some cause of God’s act of willing, but because He wills that one thing should exist because of another.

**Reply to objection 2:** Since God wills effects to exist in such a way that they issue forth from various causes, so that a certain order is preserved among things, it is not vain to look for other causes along with God’s will.

Still, it would be vain if these other causes were sought after as if they were first causes and did not depend on God’s will. This is why Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 3, “It pleased the vanity of the philosophers to attribute contingent effects to other causes, since they were completely incapable of seeing a cause higher than all the rest, viz., God’s will.”

**Reply to objection 3:** Since God wills that effects should exist because of their causes, any effects that presuppose some other effect do not depend on God’s will alone, but also depend on some other thing. However, the first effects depend on God’s will alone. For instance, we may say that (a) God willed that man should have hands in order to serve his intellect in carrying out various tasks; and that (b) He willed that he should have an intellect in order that he would be a man, and that (c) He willed him to be a man in order that he might enjoy God or in order to fill out the universe—which effects cannot be traced back to further created ends. Hence, effects of this last sort depend on God’s simple act of will, whereas the other effects depend as well on the order of causes other than God.

## Article 6

### Is God's will always fulfilled?

It seems that God's will is not always fulfilled:

**Objection 1:** In 1 Timothy 2:4 the Apostle says, "God wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." But it has not turned out that way. Therefore, God's will is not always fulfilled.

**Objection 2:** The will is related to the good as knowledge is related to the true. But God knows every truth. Therefore, He wills every good. But it is not the case that every good is effected, since there are many goods that can be effected but are not in fact effected. Therefore, God's will is not always fulfilled.

**Objection 3:** As has been explained (a. 5), since God's will is a first cause, it does not rule out mediate causes. But a first cause's effect can be impeded because of a defect in a secondary cause; for instance, the effect of our body's moving power is impeded because of lameness in the leg. Therefore, an effect of God's will can likewise be impeded because of defects in secondary causes. Therefore, God's will is not always fulfilled.

**But contrary to this:** Psalm 113:11 says, "He has done all things whatsoever He willed."

**I respond:** God's will must always be fulfilled.

To see this clearly, note that since an effect is conformed to an agent by virtue of its form, the same line of reasoning that applies to formal causes also applies to agent causes. Now in the case of formal causes, the situation is such that even though something can fall short with respect to a particular form, nothing can fall short with respect to a universal form. For instance, there can be something that is neither a man nor a living thing, but there cannot be anything that is not a being.

Hence, this same thing must likewise be true in the case of agent causes. That is, something can occur outside the order of some particular agent cause, but not outside the order of a universal cause under which all the particular causes are included. For if some particular cause fails of its effect, this is because of some other particular impeding cause which is itself subordinated to the universal cause. Hence, an effect cannot in any way fall outside the order of the universal cause.

This is clear in the case of corporeal agent causes. For instance, a celestial body can be prevented from inducing its effect, but any effect that follows among corporeal things because of an impeding corporeal cause must be traced back through the mediate causes to the universal power of the first heaven.

Therefore, since God's will is a universal cause of all things, it impossible that God's will should not attain its effect. Hence, whatever seems to deviate from God's will in one order falls back under it in another order. For instance, a sinner, who, considered in himself, deviates from God's will by sinning, falls back under the order of God's will when he is punished through God's justice.

**Reply to objection 1:** The Apostle's statement, "God wills all men to be saved, etc.," can be interpreted in three ways:

First, it can be interpreted in such a way that the [logical] distribution is restricted (*accommoda*), in which case its meaning is this: 'God wills to be saved all the men who are saved'—"not that there is no man whom He does not will to be saved, but rather that no man is saved whom He does not will to be saved," as Augustine puts it.

Second, the statement can be interpreted in such a way that the distribution is made over the genera of the singulars and not over the singulars of the genera. On this interpretation, its meaning is: 'God wills men of every status to be saved, i.e., males and females, Jews and Gentiles, great and small, etc., but not everyone of each status.'

Third, according to Damascene, the statement should be understood as referring to God's *antecedent will* and not to God's *consequent will*. This distinction applies not to God's will itself, in which there is nothing prior or posterior, but instead to the things that are willed. To understand this, note that each thing, insofar as it is good, is willed as such by God. However, there can be something which is good or evil when it is first thought of, considered absolutely, but which, insofar as it is thought of as conjoined with something else (which is a *consequent* consideration of it), turns out to be the opposite. For instance, considered absolutely, it is good for a man to live and bad for a man to be killed. However, if we add in a particular case that the man is a murderer or that his living poses a grave danger to society, then it is good for him to be killed and bad for him to live. Hence, one can say that a just judge *antecedently* wills that all men should live, but *consequently* wills that the murderer should be hanged. Similarly, God antecedently wills that all men should be saved, but He consequently wills that some should be damned in accord with the demands of His justice. However, what we antecedently will is not what we will absolutely speaking, but is instead what we will relatively speaking. For the will is related to things as they exist in themselves. But in themselves they are particulars. Hence, we will something absolutely speaking insofar as we will that thing while taking into account all the particular circumstances—which is just to will it consequently. Hence, one can say that a just judge wills, absolutely speaking, that the murderer should be hanged, whereas he wills, relatively speaking, that the man should live insofar as he is a man. Hence, the latter can be called a wish (*velleitas*) rather than an absolute act of willing. And so it is clear that what God wills absolutely speaking is effected—even though what He antecedently wills may not be effected.

**Reply to objection 2:** The act of a cognitive power occurs insofar as what is known exists in the knower, whereas the act of an appetitive power is ordered to things insofar as they exist in themselves. Now everything that has the nature of being and of the true exists virtually in God as a whole, but it is not the case that everything that has the nature of being and of the true exists as a whole among created things.

**Reply to objection 3:** A first cause can be impeded from producing its effect because of a defect in a secondary cause only when it is not itself a universally first cause that includes all causes under itself. For it were a universally first cause, then no effect could in any way escape its order. And so it is with God's will, as has been explained.

## Article 7

### Is God's will mutable?

It seems that God's will is mutable:

**Objection 1:** In Genesis 6:7 the Lord says, "I regret that I have made man." But whoever regrets something he has done has a mutable will. Therefore, God has a mutable will.

**Objection 2:** Jeremiah 18:7-8, speaking in the person of the Lord, says, "I will speak against a nation, and against a kingdom, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy it. But if that nation against which I have spoken shall repent of their evil, I also will repent of the evil that I have thought to do to them." Therefore, God has a mutable will.

**Objection 3:** Whatever God does, He does voluntarily. But God does not always do the same things; for sometimes He has commanded that laws be observed, and sometimes He has prohibited this. Therefore, He has a mutable will.

**Objection 4:** As was explained above (a. 3), God does not will what He wills by necessity.

Therefore, He is able to will and able not to will the same thing. But everything that has power with respect to two opposites is mutable. For instance, that which is able to exist and able not to exist is mutable with respect to its substance; and that which is able to be here and able not to be here is mutable with respect to its place. Therefore, God is mutable with respect to His will.

**But contrary to this:** Numbers 23:19 says, “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor is He like a son of man, that He should be changed.”

**I respond:** God’s will is altogether immutable.

However, on this topic one should note that it is one thing to change one’s will and another thing to will a change in certain things. For even while someone’s will remains unchangeably the same, he can will that something should happen now and that its contrary should happen later. On the other hand, his will would change if he began to will what he previously did not will or ceased to will what he had previously willed. This cannot happen except on the assumption that there is a change either in the cognition of the one who wills or else in the disposition of his substance. For given that willing is of the good, there are two ways in which someone can begin to will something *de novo*:

The first way is that something should begin *de novo* to be good for him. This cannot happen without a change in him. For instance, when he gets cold, it begins to be good for him to sit by a fire—which was not the case beforehand.

The second way is that he should come to see *de novo* that something is good for him, when he had previously been ignorant of this. For instance, we deliberate precisely in order to ascertain what is good for us.

Now it was shown above (q. 9, a. 1 and q. 14, a. 15) that both God’s substance and His knowledge are altogether immutable. Hence, His will must be altogether immutable.

**Reply to objection 1:** These words of the Lord should be understood metaphorically according to a likeness with us. For when we regret something, we destroy what we have made. However, this can happen without a change of will; for even a man, without a change of will, may sometimes will to make something, all the while intending to destroy it afterwards.

Therefore, God is said to have regretted something according to a likeness of action—for man, whom He had made, He wiped from the face of the earth through the flood.

**Reply to objection 2:** Since God’s will is a first and universal cause, it does not rule out mediate causes that have it within their power to produce certain effects. But because all the mediate causes are unequal in power to the first cause, there are many things contained in God’s power, knowledge, and will that are not contained within the order of lower causes, e.g., the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Thus, someone who was thinking of the lower causes might have said, ‘Lazarus will not rise’, whereas someone who was thinking of the first divine cause might have said, ‘Lazarus will rise’. And God wills both of these, viz., that sometimes something will occur because of a lower cause that will not occur because of a higher cause, and vice versa.

Therefore, we should claim that God sometimes announces that something is going to occur insofar as it is contained in the order of lower causes, i.e., according to the disposition of nature or of merits, and yet that thing does not occur, because it is otherwise with the higher divine cause. For instance, God foretold to Hezekiah, “Take order with thy house, for you shall die, and not live” (Isaiah 38:1), and yet this did not happen, because from eternity it was otherwise in God’s knowledge and will, which are immutable. For this reason, Gregory says, “God changes the sentence, but He does not change His counsel,” i.e., the counsel of His will. Therefore, the words, “I will repent,” are to be taken metaphorically. For when men do not carry out their threats, they seem to have repented.

**Reply to objection 3:** From this argument it does not follow that God has a changeable will; what follows instead is that He wills a change.

**Reply to objection 4:** As was explained above (a. 3), even if something is such that it is not absolutely necessary that God will it, it is nonetheless conditionally necessary (*ex suppositione*) that He will it—and this because of the immutability of God’s will.

## Article 8

### Does God’s will impose necessity on the things willed?

It seems that God’s will imposes necessity on the things willed:

**Objection 1:** In the *Enchiridion* Augustine says, “No one is saved unless God wills that he be saved. And so he should implore God to will it, since if He wills it, it will necessarily happen.”

**Objection 2:** Every unimpedible cause produces its effect by necessity; for, as *Physics 2* explains, nature always does the same thing unless something impedes it. But God’s will is unimpedible; for in Romans 9:19 the Apostle asks, “Who resists His will?” Therefore, God’s will imposes necessity on things.

**Objection 3:** That which has necessity from something prior to it is absolutely necessary; for instance, it is necessary for an animal to die because it is composed of contrary parts. But a thing created by God is related to God’s will as to something prior to it by virtue of which it has necessity; for the conditional, ‘If God wills something, it exists’, is true, and every true conditional is necessary. Thus, it follows that everything that God wills is absolutely necessary.

**But contrary to this:** All the goods that are effected are such that God wills that they be effected. Therefore, if His will imposed necessity on the things that are willed, it would follow that all goods occur by necessity. And so that would be the end of free choice, deliberation, and all other such things.

**I respond:** God’s will imposes necessity of some of the things willed, but not on all of them.

Some have wanted to explain this by appeal to the mediating causes, claiming that the things God’s will produces through necessary causes are necessary, whereas the things God’s will produces through contingent causes are contingent. But this explanation seems inadequate on two counts:

First, the reason why the effect of a first cause is contingent in virtue of a secondary cause is that the first cause’s effect is impeded by some defect in the secondary cause—in the way, for instance, that the sun’s power is impeded by a defect in a plant. But no defect in a secondary cause can prevent God’s will from producing its effect.

Second, if the distinction between contingent effects and necessary effects were traceable solely to the secondary causes, it would follow that this distinction falls outside of God’s intention and will—which is false.

And so a better explanation is that this distinction occurs because of the efficacy of God’s will. For when a cause is efficacious in its action, the effect follows upon the cause not only with respect to *what* is effected but also with respect to the *mode* in which it is effected or in which it exists. For instance, because of a defect in the active power of the semen, it is possible for a son to be born who is dissimilar to his father in various accidents that pertain to a thing’s mode of existing. Therefore, since God’s will is absolutely efficacious, it follows not only that the things God wills to be effected are in fact effected, but also that they are effected in the mode in which God wills them to be effected. But God wills some things to be effected necessarily and others contingently, so that there might be an order among things for the sake of the completeness of the universe. And so for some effects He has applied necessary causes which cannot fail and from which the effects issue forth by necessity, whereas for other effects He has applied contingent and defectible causes, from which the effects issue forth contingently.

Therefore, the reason why effects willed by God come about contingently is not that their proximate causes are contingent, but rather that God has willed them to come about contingently and has prepared contingent causes for them.

**Reply to objection 1:** In this passage Augustine should be understood to be talking about a conditional, rather than absolute, necessity in the things willed by God. For this conditional is necessarily true: ‘If God wills this thing, then it exists.’

**Reply to objection 2:** From the fact that nothing resists God’s will it follows not only that what God wills to be effected is in fact effected, but also that what He wills to be effected contingently or wills to be effected necessarily is indeed effected in that way.

**Reply to objection 3:** What is posterior has its necessity from what is prior according to the mode of that prior thing. Hence, the things effected by God’s will have necessity of the sort that God wills them to have, viz., either absolute necessity or merely conditional necessity. And so not all of them are absolutely necessary.

## Article 9

### Does God will evils?

It seems that God wills evils:

**Objection 1:** God wills every good that is effected. But it is good that evils should be effected; for in the *Enchiridion* Augustine says, “Even though evils, insofar as they are evil, are not good, nonetheless, it is good not only that there should be goods, but also that there should be evils.” Therefore, God wills evils.

**Objection 2:** In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says that evil will contribute to the perfection of everything (i.e., of the universe). And in the *Enchiridion* Augustine says, “All things are part of the admirable beauty of the universe, so that even that which is called evil makes the good things stand out more prominently when it is correctly ordered and put in its proper place. For the good things are more pleasing and more laudable when they are compared to the evils.” But God wills everything that pertains to the perfection and beauty of the universe, since it is this perfection and beauty that God wills most of all in creatures. Therefore, God wills evils.

**Objection 3:** *That evils be effected* and *that evils not be effected* are opposed as contradictories. But God does not will that evils not be effected; for since some evils are in fact effected, it would follow that God’s will is not always fulfilled. Therefore, God wills that evils be effected.

**But contrary to this:** In 83 *Quaestiones* Augustine says, “A man becomes worse when he has no wise man to guide him. But God is more excellent than any wise man. Therefore, when God is guiding him, a man will all the less become worse. But ‘when God is guiding’ is equivalent to ‘when God wills.’” Therefore, it is not the case that when God wills, a man becomes worse. But it is clear that something is made worse by every evil. Therefore, God does not will evils.

**I respond:** Since, as was explained above (q. 5, a. 1), the nature of the good is the nature of what is desirable, whereas evil is opposed to good, it is impossible that any evil, as such, should be desired either by a natural desire or by an animal desire or by an intellective desire, i.e., by the will.

However, an evil may be desired *per accidens* to the extent that it follows upon some good. This is evident with every kind of desire. For a natural agent does not desire privation or corruption; rather, it desires a form that is conjoined with the privation of some other form, and it desires the generation of one thing, which is the corruption of another. Again, when a lion sees a stag, it desires food that is

conjoined with the death of an animal. Similarly, a fornicator desires a pleasure that is conjoined with the deformity of sin. Thus, an evil that is conjoined to one good is the privation of some other good. Therefore, evil would never be desired—not even *per accidens*—if the good that the evil is conjoined to were not desired more than the good that is undermined by the evil.

Now there is no good that God wills more than His own goodness, and yet He desires some goods more than others. God in no way wills the evil of sin, which undermines one's ordination to the divine good. On the other hand, He does will the evil of a natural defect or the evil of punishment by willing a good that is conjoined to such an evil. For instance, in willing justice, He wills punishment; and in willing that the order of nature be preserved, He wills that certain things be naturally corrupted.

**Reply to objection 1:** Some have claimed that even though God does not will evils, He nonetheless wills that evils exist or that they be effected—for even though evils are not good, it is nonetheless good that evils exist or that they be effected. They made this claim because things that are evil in themselves are ordered to some good, and they believed that this ordering is implied when one says that evils exist or are effected.

But this claim is mistaken, since evil is ordered to good *per accidens* and not *per se*. For it lies outside the sinner's intention that some good should follow from his sin; for example, it lay outside the intention of the tyrants that their persecutions should have made the patience of the martyrs shine forth. And so one cannot claim that such an ordering is implied when one says that it is good for evil to exist or to be effected. For nothing is judged according to what belongs to it *per accidens*; rather, it is judged according to what belongs to it *per se*.

**Reply to objection 2:** As has been explained, evil does not work toward the perfection and beauty of the universe except *per accidens*. Moreover, in the place where Dionysius says that evil contributes to the perfection of the universe, he is arguing by way of a *reductio ad absurdum*.

**Reply to objection 3:** Even though *that evils be effected* and *that evils not be effected* are opposed as contradictories, it is nonetheless the case that *to will that evils be effected* and *to will that evils not be effected* are not opposed as contradictories, since both are affirmative. Thus, God wills neither that evils be effected nor that evils not be effected; instead, He wills to permit evils to be effected. And this is something good.

## Article 10

### Does God have free choice?

It seems that God does not have free choice:

**Objection 1:** In a homily on the prodigal son, Jerome says, "God alone is such that sin neither does nor can belong to Him. Others, since they have free choice, can incline themselves to either part of a contradiction."

**Objection 2:** Free choice is a faculty of reason and will by which good and evil are chosen. But, as has been explained (a. 9), God does not will evil. Therefore, free choice does not exist in God.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Fide* Ambrose says, "The Holy Spirit gives to each as He will, i.e., according to the choice of His free will, which is not subject to any necessity."

**I respond:** We ourselves have free choice with respect to those things that we do not will necessarily or by natural instinct. For instance, it pertains to natural instinct and not to free choice that we will to be happy. Hence, other animals, which are moved to act by natural instinct, are not said to be moved by free choice.

Therefore, since, as was shown above (a. 3), God wills His own goodness by necessity, but does not will other things by necessity, He has free choice with respect to those things that He does not will by necessity.

**Reply to objection 1:** Jerome seems to be denying free choice to God not absolutely speaking, but only with respect to falling into sin.

**Reply to objection 2:** Since, as was shown above (a. 2), the evil of sin implies a turning away from the divine goodness through which God wills all things, it is clearly impossible for Him to will the evil of sin. Yet He is open to opposites insofar as He is able to will that *this* thing should exist or not exist—just as we ourselves are able, without sinning, to will to sit and not to will to sit.

## Article 11

### Should signs be ascribed to God's will?

It seems that signs should not be ascribed to God's will:

**Objection 1:** Just as God's will is a cause of things, so too is His knowledge. But no signs are ascribed to God's knowledge. Therefore, neither should signs be ascribed to God's will.

**Objection 2:** Any sign that does not correspond to that of which it is a sign is a false sign. Therefore, any signs ascribed to God's will are such that (a) if they do not correspond to God's will, then they are false, and (b) if they do correspond to God's will, then it is superfluous to ascribe them. Therefore, no signs should be ascribed to God's will.

**But contrary to this:** God's will is unified, since it is God's very essence. But it is sometimes signified in the plural, as when it is said, "Great are the works of the Lord, sought out according to all His wills" (Psalm 110:2). Therefore, a sign of God's will sometimes has to be taken for His will.

**I respond:** As is clear from what was said above (q. 13, a. 3), some things are properly predicated of God and other things are predicated of Him metaphorically. When certain human passions are appropriated metaphorically in predications about God, this is because of a similarity in their effects—so that something that is a sign of a given passion in our case is signified metaphorically in God by the name of that passion. For instance, we ourselves are prone to punish someone when we are angry with him, so that the punishment is a sign of our anger. Because of this, it is the punishment itself that is signified by the name 'anger' when anger is attributed to God.

Similarly, that which is normally in our case a sign of what we will is sometimes metaphorically called 'will' in the case of God. For instance, when someone commands something, this is a sign that he wills that thing to be done; hence, a divine command is sometimes metaphorically called 'God's will'—e.g., "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

However, there is a difference between 'will' and 'anger'. For 'anger' is never properly predicated of God, since it includes a passion in its principal meaning; by contrast, 'will' is properly predicated of God. And so in the case of God 'will' as properly predicated is distinct from 'will' as metaphorically predicated. For when 'will' is properly predicated of God, it is called his 'well-pleased will' (*voluntas beneplaciti*), whereas when 'will' is metaphorically predicated of God, it is called His 'signed will' (*voluntas signi*), because a sign of His will is itself being called His will.

**Reply to objection 1:** It is only through the will that knowledge is a cause of the things that are effected. For we do not effect the things we know unless we will to. And so signs are not attributed to knowledge in the way they are attributed to the will.

**Reply to objection 2:** Signs of the will are called 'God's wills' not because they are signs that

God has willed something, but rather because things that in our case are usually signs of what we will are called ‘wills’ in the case of God. In the same way, punishment is not a sign that there is anger in God; rather, since punishment is a sign of anger in us, punishment is called ‘anger’ in the case of God.

## Article 12

### **Is it appropriate to ascribe these five signs to God’s will: *prohibition, command, counsel, operation, and permission?***

It seems inappropriate to ascribe these five signs to God’s will, viz., *prohibition, command, counsel, operation, and permission*:

**Objection 1:** God sometimes operates to effect in us the same things that He commands or counsels us to do. And He sometimes prohibits the same things that at other times He permits. Therefore, these five signs should not be distinguished from one another as opposites.

**Objection 2:** As Wisdom 11:25-26 says, God does not operate to effect anything unless He wills that thing. But His signed will is distinct from His well-pleased will. Therefore, *operation* should not be included under God’s signed will.

**Objection 3:** *Operation* and *permission* apply to all things in general, since God operates in all things and permits things to happen among all things. By contrast, *command, counsel, and prohibition* apply only to rational creatures. Therefore, since these five signs do not belong to the same order, it is inappropriate for them to come together under a single division.

**Objection 4:** Evil occurs in more ways than good does; for, as is clear from *Ethics* 2 and from Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, good occurs in just one way but evil occurs in many ways. Therefore, it is wrong to ascribe just one sign with respect to evil, viz., *prohibition*, and two signs with respect to good, viz., *counsel* and *command*.

**I respond:** These signs of the will are those by which we ourselves normally show that we will something.

Now someone can show that (a) he wills something through himself or that (b) he wills something through another.

He shows that he wills it through himself insofar as he does something either (i) directly or (ii) indirectly and *per accidens*: Directly, when he does it by himself, and on this score the sign is called *operation*. Indirectly, insofar as he himself does not prevent an operation, since, according to *Physics* 8, one who removes an impediment is called a *per accidens* mover; and on this score the sign is called *permission*.

He shows that he wills something through another insofar as he directs another to do something—and this either (i) through a obligatory direction, which he does by *commanding* what he wills and *prohibiting* the contrary, or (ii) through a persuasive direction, which pertains to *counsel*.

Therefore, since these are the ways in which someone shows that he wills something, these five things are sometimes called ‘God’s will’ in the sense of signs of His will. That *command, counsel, and prohibition* are called God’s will is clear from Matthew 6:10, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” That *permission* and *operation* are called ‘God’s will’ is clear from Augustine, who says in the *Enchiridion*, “Nothing is effected unless the omnipotent one wills that it be effected, either by doing it or by allowing it to be done.”

Alternatively, one can say that *permission* and *operation* relate to the present, with permission pertaining to evil and operation pertaining to good—whereas, with respect to the future, *prohibition*

pertains to evil, *command* pertains to that good which is necessary, and *counsel* pertains to that good which is superabundant.

**Reply to objection 1:** Nothing prevents someone from showing in diverse ways that he wills one and the same thing—just as there are many names that signify the same thing. Hence, nothing prevents the same thing from falling under a command, a counsel, and an operation; and nothing prevents the same thing from falling under a prohibition or a permission.

**Reply to objection 2:** Just as one can signify metaphorically that God wills something that He does not will properly speaking, so too one can signify metaphorically that He wills something that He does will properly speaking. Hence, nothing prevents God from having both a well-pleased will and a signed will with respect to the same thing.

Now *operation* always coincides with God's well-pleased will, whereas this is not the case with *command* or *counsel*. For, as has been explained, (a) operation has to do with the present, whereas command and counsel have to do with the future, and (b) operation is an effect that God wills through Himself, whereas command and counsel are willed through another.

**Reply to objection 3:** A rational creature has dominion over his acts, and so special signs of God's will are assigned for him insofar as God orders the rational creature toward acting voluntarily and through himself. However, other creatures do not act unless they are moved by God's operation, and so in their case there is no room for anything other than operation and permission.

**Reply to objection 4:** All sinful evil, even if it happens in many ways, nonetheless concurs in being incompatible with God's will, and this is why a single sign, viz., *prohibition*, is assigned with respect to evils. On the other hand, goods are related in different ways to God's goodness. For there are some goods without which we cannot attain the enjoyment of God's goodness, and with respect to these goods there is *command*. By contrast, there are other goods by which we attain God's goodness in a more perfect manner, and with respect to these goods there is *counsel*. Alternatively, one can say that *counsel* pertains not only to the pursuit of greater goods, but also to the avoidance of lesser evils.